

The Value and Benefits of Play during this Covid-19 Pandemic

During these strange and unprecedented times, where we are living with the unknown and the uncertainty of this horrible virus, play and playful interactions are one of the things that can help our children, but just as importantly it helps us. Play is children's natural way to communicate, work through their feelings, connect to others and to find ways to understand what is happening.

It can at times feel like the importance of play is minimised or at least not given the it deserves, however play is vital for healthy human development. Play has so many benefits generally, but particularly in these strange times, play will enable us to begin to process, understand and recover from what we have been living through.

Here are just a few of the benefits of play:

- Play is how children experience fun and joy (we all need fun and joy at the moment)
- Helps build relationships and keeps us connected to others.
- Develops physical, cognitive, and imaginative skills,
- Explore the world and different situations
- Experience and identify emotions
- Time to think, explore & experience
- Practise roles
- Learn, relax and have fun
- Act out their worrying issues
- Gain control over their worries.
- Through appropriate play children develop their personalities and a positive sense of self, realise their potential and experience success
- Play unlocks children's creativity and imagination, and develops reading, thinking and problem-solving skills as well as motor skills
- Through play, children process and manage emotions, and understand and interpret the world around them
- Helps children learn social skills, and develop values and ethics

Not only does play help the above, but by playing, the brain produces lots of feel-good chemicals such as dopamine, but not only this, play decreased the stress chemicals in the brain. We are currently living in stressful and at times distressing circumstances and no matter how much we try to shield our children from this, they will be picking up



This is a picture about play that is on the wall in our office

on our confusion and stress. Therefore, we suggest using the benefits of play to mitigate the impact of this pandemic.

Play does not have to be something elaborate and planned out, sometimes it is better for it to be spontaneous and simple. Play with a bowl of water and some bubble bath will soothe and calm your child. Painting the garden fence or wall with a bowl of water and a paint brush will improve their big muscles (gross motor skills), which in turn will improve their small actions (fine motor skills) that we need for writing.



The therapeutic soothing and calming qualities of playing with cornflour.

It is also just as important to perhaps join them in their play, sitting beside them when they are drawing, playing with the toys or on their video games. Some concerns have been expressed about the use of video games, but it is like everything it has its benefits, but if that is all we do, then it is not healthy. However, a little bit of everything helps. When our boys were little, we would play PC games with them. They would sit on our lap, whilst we played the games. We would be in physical contact, chatting and connecting with them. It has been interesting, whilst in lockdown that our youngest son has asked to play some of the PC games we used to play when he was 10 years old. (Thankfully, he sits beside me now as he is nearly 6 foot tall.) We are playing these in the evening.

Please do not worry if your child starts playing with younger things. It is very typical for children who are undergoing stressful times to play the things they used to play when they were younger. At times of stress and feelings of uncertainty, children will often revert to earlier times when they felt comfortable and safer.

Just a side note, the games we are playing are [Her Interactive Nancy Drew Detective Games](#). They are mystery games, that require the player to find the clues, work out the



puzzles and search for the answers. They are great fun. There are two levels (Amateur Sleuth and Master Sleuth). We are needing to search the internet for some of the answers to the Master Sleuth puzzles.

Play can take any form and please remember you do not have to be great at playing, the children just want us to join them. They are very forgiving. Time flies when you are having fun.

Please check out our parents/carers section on play and a few fun and cheap play activities.

[Jogo Behaviour Support Parent & Carers page](#)